Time is precious, and to give up an hour or more of it can be a difficult decision when there are plenty of other uses competing for attention. As a business leader, you often look at what the most effective use of your time is – how can you get the most bang for your buck?

Speed networking programs are frequently hosted by networking organizations. These events can be lucrative ways to develop connections quickly that you otherwise may not have access to.

1. **Be honest.** If you don’t know the answer to something, if your business doesn’t offer a service, always be honest about what you do and don’t offer or do. Lying may impress someone in the moment, but when you ultimately don’t offer the service you told them they did, you’ll be in an awkward situation.
2. **Come prepared with talking points.** Because this is speed networking, there is little time to small talk. Your first impression is everything. Have a few talking points prepared, and think about possible questions someone could ask you. The more you have prepared in advance, the less time you’ll have to waste thinking of the perfect answer (or wishing you had the perfect answer) during the event. Also be sure to have your elevator pitch prepared. Sharing quickly what you do is paramount.
3. **Don’t forget your materials.** Because you only have a few minutes (or less!) to share your business with a new connection, be sure you are well prepared with business cards and a one pager about your services. Giving people you talk to a takeaway that will give them information on your business well after you’ve talked can help them remember you.
4. **Take notes.** Spend a few minutes after a conversation jotting a few brief notes about a person on their business card or in your phone. You’ll have an easier time getting your notes down while the information is fresh.
5. **Follow up with people you’ve talked to.** The worst mistake you can make is never sending an email or phone call after you’ve met with people at a networking event, including speed mixers. The follow up is where you really begin building a powerful relationship – the speed networking event was just getting your foot in the door.

Do you attend speed networking events? What are your tips for success?